

## DRAFT

### Minutes of Part of the Meeting

of the

### COMAL Standardisation and Development Groups

Edinburgh, 20 September 1985

The Development Group Meeting resumed at 1400.

#### STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

Two major avenues of possible development were discussed: records and matrices. These were seen as leaning towards business (records) and science (matrices). Records, in particular, were seen as being capable of extending the horizons of the language instead of continuing the round of minor amendments to what's already there. The needs of users should be taken into account: one of these needs is for a standard for the language and hence for agreement between implementors.

The need for the language to have a higher profile was discussed. The possible publicity effect of the Scottish adoption of the language and of the release of the IBM version were noted. The launch of a user magazine was felt to be too ambitious but the use of a page in some existing publication might be possible. Acorn User had expressed an interest and DC would collect example programs for publication: PC, PB and IM agreed to consider supplying programs. Prestel might be another possible way of distributing information. Anyone able to get publicity for the language in general (as opposed to specific to particular implementations) should contact the Secretary if minor expenditure was required. PB is prepared to give talks on COMAL free of charge within the UK.

#### PACKAGES

In view of the Danish proposal IM and DC withdrew their proposal with the proviso that it be considered if the Danish proposal proved impossible to implement. The principles outlined in the Danish proposal were **approved 21-0** and further discussion was deferred for six months to allow implementors to look at the practical problems of implementing the proposals.

#### COMMAND ENVIRONMENT

AA introduced the proposal. The general question of a line range separator ("-", ",", or ":") raised the problems of the impossibility of line number arithmetic if "-" were used and the undesirability of ",". It was **agreed 10-4** to move towards the use of ":" in future implementations. The idea of AUTO defaulting to the last line number + 10 was liked by users. DELETE <filename> should replace DELETE <unit name>. What happens when an attempt is made to delete a non-existent file should be specified. It was agreed that a MERGE command should be added:

MERGE [<first line>][,<increment>]<unit name>

The Meeting adjourned at 1800 and resumed at 1930.

Listing with indented structures was intentionally not in the minimum command set and was seen as being an extension. NEW should cause the loss of any current program and symbol table and the resetting of system variables to their default values. DEL, DELETE and REMOVE were discussed with no conclusion. That RUN clears variables should be specified. The problems with SELECT OUTPUT when a STOP or END was executed were noted as was the requirement for an improved proposal in this matter. The problems with what should happen when an error was encountered during an ENTER operation could not be easily resolved and were deferred for an improved proposal. The syntax of the COPY and RENAME commands was considered (e.g. COPY [TO] <unit name> FROM <unit name> or COPY [FROM] <unit name> TO <unit name>) and was deferred for a more detailed proposal. A future proposal should also tackle the question of minimum abbreviations. It was agreed that a revised version of the proposal should be submitted to the Standards Group in March. The Danish implementors (Unicomal, DDE, and RC) were thanked for the considerable effort they had put into the proposal.

#### ERROR HANDLER

PC pointed out that standardising an error handler was almost pointless unless error numbers were also standardised: this is attempted in the ANSI BASIC standard. The Danish implementors agreed to identify, before the next meeting, the errors to be recognised and to try to put numbers to them. Other implementors agreed to provide this group with lists of their errors and error numbers.

The Development Group Meeting adjourned at 2100.

A Meeting of the Standards Group convened at 2100. JC took the Chair.

KR read the section of the Rules concerning voting and cautioned members that they should not be changed lightly. He pointed out that they can not be too bad if they have allow broad agreement to be reached on packages and the command set. He also pointed out that the rules could only be enforced by persuasion, not by compulsion.

The status of abstentions was questioned and the possibility of mandating the Chairman of the Development Group was discussed. The closer involvement of user groups was suggested. Further discussion was deferred until the March meeting. Proposals for changes should be made before then. Copies of the rules are to be circulated as soon as possible.

A vote of thanks to Kevin Ryan, the retiring Secretary, was carried by the applause of all present.

The Meeting adjourned at 2145.